

## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please replace the claims, including all prior versions, with the listing of claims below.

### LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claim 1 (Currently amended) [[An]] A method for manufacturing an information storage system comprising:

[[an information storage medium;]]

at least one read/write head comprising a transducer for information introduction and/or retrieval from the information storage medium; and an actuator supporting at least one read/write head for moving the transducer relative to the information storage medium;

[[wherein the information storage medium has an as deposited]] depositing a composite nickel coating [[thereon]] on a non-magnetic substrate, the composite nickel coating including an electrolessly deposited nickel layer formed on a sputter deposited nickel layer,

eliminating a subsequent polishing step, and

depositing a magnetic recording layer on the composite nickel coating

[[further wherein the composite nickel coating has a surface roughness (Ra) less than about 10 Å]].

Claim 2 (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the sputter deposited nickel layer comprises nickel-phosphorus.

Claim 3 (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the electrolessly deposited nickel layer comprises nickel-phosphorus.

Claim 4 (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the sputter deposited nickel layer has a thickness in a range of about 10 Å to about 1000 Å.

Claim 5 (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the electrolessly deposited nickel layer has a thickness in a range of about 0.5 microns to about 10 microns.

Claim 6-12 (Canceled)

Claim 13 (Currently amended) The ~~information storage system~~ method of claim 1, wherein the surface roughness (Ra) is an average of a 10 micron x 10 micron scan of a surface of the composite nickel coating by an atomic field microscopy.

Claim 14 (Canceled)

Claim 15 (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the composite nickel coating has a surface roughness (Ra) less than about 10 Å.

Claim 16 (New) A magnetic recording medium comprising:  
a non-magnetic substrate,  
an as deposited composite nickel coating formed without polishing on a non-magnetic substrate, the composite nickel coating including an electrolessly deposited nickel layer formed on a sputter deposited nickel layer, and

depositing a magnetic recording layer on the composite nickel coating, wherein the composite nickel coating has a surface roughness (Ra) less than about 10 Å.

Claim 17 (New) A magnetic recording medium of claim 16 formed by depositing a composite nickel coating on a non-magnetic substrate and eliminating a subsequent polishing step prior to depositing a magnetic recording layer on the composite nickel coating.